

2013

### "The People Did Not Stop."

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#### Recommended Citation

Baker, Taylor and Mangovski, Samantha (2013) ""The People Did Not Stop.,"" *Intertext*. Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/intertext/vol21/iss1/22>

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“The **people** did  
not **stop.**”



**How does community change happen?**

Upon walking into Steve Parks' class, we observed the gathering of complete strangers—teachers and students—interested in civic writing. The class was joined by teachers from various countries in the Middle East and North Africa who were part of the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship program at the Maxwell School for Citizenship and Public Affairs. As time passed, the uncommon ground between the students in Parks' class and the visiting teachers was crossed through the power of storytelling.

captivated as her deep words commanded the attention of the entire room. Standing before us, Nijmeh retold a story of a time that made her realize what it really meant to live through political occupation: strolling through the streets of Jerusalem on what seemed to be an ordinary day, Nijmeh witnessed an act of unprovoked aggression by an Israeli soldier against an elderly merchant. As others continued to walk by as if nothing had happened, Nijmeh acted on her instincts and ran to the aid of an old man crying alone in the street.



Layout by Taylor Baker and Samantha Mangovski. Photographs by Taylor Baker.

In order to break the ice, each person was urged to share a story of a pivotal moment, big or small, when they took a stand. We observed and listened as each speaker courageously invited strangers into their personal world, vividly illustrating past events of struggle, hardship, and triumph. As the class listened, we saw students and educators deeply engage and bond with each other through a shared humanity.

Listening to Nijmeh Ali, a doctoral student and teacher in the Political Studies Department at Al Quds University in Jerusalem, we were

In hindsight, Nijmeh recalls how this event taught her that simply reading books about political reform was not enough to elicit tangible change in the world. Change lies in acting and in choice—the choice to do what is right. Nijmeh's story shows that the catalyst for change lies within each one of us.

Nijmeh tells how she found the courage to stand up for what is right, even when it meant putting her own safety on the line. To view Nijmeh telling her story, "The People Did Not Stop," visit <http://wrt-intertext.syr.edu>.

—Taylor Baker and Samantha Mangovski